

List of other Ornithological Publications received.

- MULLENS, W. H. & SWANN, H. K. A Bibliography of British Ornithology. (Part V. London, 1917.)
- WITHERBY, H. F. On some Results of ringing Song-Thrushes, Blackbirds, Lapwings, and Woodcock. ('British Birds,' Vol. x. No. 9. London, 1917.)
- The Auk. (Vol. xxxiv. No. 1. Cambridge, Mass., 1917.)
- Avicultural Magazine. (Third Series, Vol. viii. Nos. 1-5. London, 1917.)
- Bird Notes. (New Series, Vol. viii. No. 1. Ashbourne, 1917.)
- British Birds. (Vol. x. Nos. 9, 10. London, 1917.)
- The Condor. (Vol. xix. No. 1. Hollywood, Cal., 1916.)
- The Irish Naturalist. (Vol. xxvi. Nos. 1-3. Dublin, 1917.)
- Journal of the Federated Malay States Museum. (Vol. vii. pt. 2, Singapore, 1916.)
- Revue Française d'Ornithologie. (Nos. 93, 94. Orléans, 1917.)
- The Scottish Naturalist. (Nos. 61-63. Edinburgh, 1917.)
- The South Australian Ornithologist. (Vol. iii. pt. 1. Adelaide, 1917.)

XVI.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

Colours of the Eggs and the Nests of Birds.

SIR,—I write to correct a wrong impression of my view on "Coincidence" and mimicry which may have been left as the result of an omission (already referred to) from my April paper, and of the fact that the full explanation of the egg-plate in the succeeding article (October) reached you when the latter was already in pagged proof.

The view suggested in these two places was, briefly, that variation in mouths and eggs (and, I believe, elsewhere) is, to an immense extent, not lateral, so to speak, but backward and forward along the line of already-accomplished evolution—a matter, probably, of the suppression or restoration in ontogeny of particular colour-changes corresponding to particular ancestral stages, intermediate as well as terminal.

In *nestlings'* mouths it seems to be also a matter of relative acceleration. Thus, allowing for cases of suppression (which are betrayed sometimes by incompleteness), the mouths of Passerine birds of various families run through what appears to be the same succession of changes, but particular stages coincide with different ages in different species, and sometimes even in individuals of the same species, producing inter-specific diversity and intra-specific variation and even the appearance of "mutation." It was in this sense that I used the term "reversionary" of the unusual Warblers' tongues of my text-figure ('Ibis,' 1916, p. 293), and I feel that it would have been exceedingly interesting had Capt. Ingram been able to see one or more of his aberrant Skylark mouths ('Ibis,' 1916, p. 523) before hatching, and keep track of the post-nidal development of the others, and to note that the plain yellow tongue was preceded or succeeded by a twin-spot stage. I must here qualify a statement, made in the present connection on p. 562, with regard to an incipient resemblance between a stage passed right through by the mouth of *Dryoscopus guttatus* and the final mouth of *Batis*, &c. The darkening never became more than incipient, and may or may not have been of significance. The real *blackening*, when it began, was centrifugal.

In applying this view to eggs—here it might be suggested that the successive processes of pigment deposition constitute an ontogenetic phenomenon—I used as illustrations especially figs. 5, 24, 25, and 20 ('Ibis,' 1916, pl. xix), representing sufficiently four forms of egg laid by members of the genus *Cossypha*. The egg of *C. natalensis*, normally at Chirinda the dark brown nightingale-like egg of fig. 20, is sometimes found with fewer pigment-layers (apparently, like fig. 24) and, rarely, as a pale blue egg like the Redstart's. Each form represents what is the *usual* egg at this moment, of others of the Turdidæ and is found also in other families. Conversely, *C. heuglini*, laying normally at Chirinda an egg more or less like fig. 25, was once found

with eggs showing the additional heavy pigmentation of normal *C. natalensis* (fig. 20), the bird being secured at the nest. Col. Rattray's interesting "hedge-sparrow" eggs laid by a Nightingale (B. O. C. Bull. xxxvi. p. 79), the evidence of identity being here very perfect, constitute another of these cases. They strike us strongly in species in which they are of relatively rare occurrence, but what seems to be the same phenomenon can be illustrated abundantly from the common forms of eggs of more frankly heteroic species. That a Mendelian relationship exists between such forms seems exceedingly likely, and it is also probable enough that one of the main functions of the Mendelian mode of inheritance is the preservation of forms that have been useful in the past and may again be useful or are actually still useful for the production of advantageous polymorphism.

"The wide distribution" (I quote here from the draft of my discussion of the egg-plate) "of the twin-spot tongue in Passerine nestlings warns us that colour-characters that probably arose in a very far-back ancestor indeed may continue to be utilized by its descendants in families now widely divergent; and considerations . . . suggest that so-called cases of coincidence or parallel evolution may be, to a vastly greater extent than at first sight seems likely, instances of the phenomenon" I have re-suggested above. In other words, coincidence, whether it happens to subserve the purpose of mimicry and to receive thereby the support of selection, or whether it is purely useless *as* coincidence, is probably in the main a matter of reversion to the same point in a common ancestry, and there is probably very little *true* mimicry—based on new and independent coincidental variation—to be found in either the eggs or mouths of birds. One or two possible exceptions can be suggested.

Holding this view, and (p. 547) not laying "excessive stress on the occurrence" of mimicry, I will have seemed to have devoted undue space to the subject. But it was suggested to me (by more than one person) that, most

ornithologists being necessarily less acquainted with the details of the theories of mimicry and warning colours than are entomologists, I ought to include in my paper a discussion of the principles involved; and I think it was perhaps well to do this even if I suggested mimicry merely "as a possibly useful line of contributory explanation" (p. 554). But I freely admit that I was in any case more inclined to believe in the probable occurrence of true mimicry in eggs and mouths at the time I commenced to write the paper than I am now.

The following corrections should be made:—

- Page 555, line 30. For "few" and "elements" read "far" and "element."
- " 557, " 36. " "indicated" read "vindicated."
- " 558, " 11. " "probable" read "provable."
- " 563, " 11. " "those" read "three."
- " 564, " 11. " "chitinous" read "chitinless."
- " 568, " 25. " "in many cases" read "in any case."
- " 569, " 33. " "selection" read "selective." Also on p. 571, l. 8.
- " 572, " 9. " *Geochelidon* read *Gelochelidon*.
- " 573, " 8. " "hence" read "have"; omit "have" in next line.
- " 590, " 11. " "forms" read "form."
- " 596, " 9. " "as" read "or."
- " 529. Fig. 14 is *Ilyphantornis jamesoni*, a Dicruroid form of the egg, not *Pycnonotus layardi*.

As for the *probability* of the view (p. 558, l. 11) that the influence exercised by parasitic birds may have been great, I need only say that I find it difficult now to regard it as a coincidence that the order which shows the greatest diversity in the coloration of its eggs should also be the one that is most liable to victimization by Cuckoos, and that my experiments in the substitution of eggs have convinced me that the need for the baffling of Cuckoos, leading to the encouragement of variability within the species, may well have been the primary, if indirect, factor in the production of that diversity as well as an important contributor to the

production, incidental and otherwise, of distinctiveness of appearance in eggs of the same order.

The resemblance referred to on line 37 of p. 362 is one of rough general appearance.

Yours truly,

Gungunyana,
Melsetter, Rhodesia.

C. F. M. SWYNNERTON.

3 December, 1916.

SIR,—It is rather misleading to class such birds as the Lesser Black-backed and Herring-Gull as highly gregarious: the Common Gull as less so, and the Great Black-backed as least of all (p. 572). All these species are gregarious, but of course the Great Black-back is much less numerous in the British Isles than the others. Even here there are colonies where over fifty pairs breed together, and in Iceland I have known of over 1200 eggs taken from a single "holm." Mr. Swynnerton's statement that the eggs of the Great Black-back are "rather markedly uniform" must be founded on the comparison of a small or ill-selected series, for the range of colouring, from spotless blue to red, is as great as in the case of the Black-headed Gull. This is the more remarkable as the number of eggs examined of the former species bears no proportion to the countless thousands of those of the latter which have passed under the eyes of collectors. If only a limited number of the eggs of all our British breeding species were examined, and in every case the same number was available for comparison, the Black-headed Gull would not be regarded as a species laying variable eggs, but rather the reverse.

Yours truly,

H. R. JOURDAIN.

Appleton Rectory,
Abingdon, Berkshire.
15 January, 1917.

A Long-lived Eagle.

SIR,—In 'The Ibis' for 1877 my late father described (pp. 219–221) at some length a pair of White-shouldered Eagles (*Aquila adalberti* Brehm) which were obtained from a nest in Spain by Lord Lilford in May 1872, and Lord Lilford again refers to these birds in 'The Norwich Naturalists' Transactions' (vol. iv. pp. 566, 567). One of these Eagles was killed by an accident when about twenty-three years old, but the other has just died (December 26, 1916) at the patriarchal age of nearly forty-five, which may be worth putting on record.

Yours obediently,

Keswick Hall, Norfolk.

J. H. GURNEY.

18 January, 1917.

 The Damaraland Hornbill.

SIR,—Having been on active service ever since the beginning of the war I have had very little opportunity of studying 'The Ibis,' and it was only recently that the numbers for 1915 reached me here. I was very much interested in Mr. Claude Grant's excellent articles on the birds collected in British East Africa and Uganda. I wish all ornithologists would go as carefully into the subject as Mr. Grant and monograph each species and its various races.

I differ from Mr. Grant, however, in one point: he states that in his opinion the Red-billed Hornbill from Damaraland named *damarensis* is only an albinistic form of *Lophoceros erythrorhynchus caffer*. I am sure he is wrong in this. I have been collecting birds in this country now for some time and have had plenty of opportunity of observing the forms of Red-billed Hornbills, which are not uncommon, and the following are my conclusions:—The form found in the north of Damaraland, at this place for instance, is most certainly *L. erythrorhynchus caffer*, but as one goes south it gradually merges into *damarensis*; birds collected at Akanjande appear somewhat intermediate, some favouring *caffer* others *damarensis*. I am not sure how far south the Red-billed Hornbill occurs, but I know it is found

as far south as Usakos, which is nearly the southern limit of the bush country. I have no specimens from this place, but when there I saw numbers which appeared very white on the head and neck.

The most southerly specimen I have is one from Omaruru, a male; this differs from *caffer* in having the whole sides of head and neck pure white, with only a very slight admixture of grey feathers on the sides of the neck, in having a much larger amount of white on the secondaries and wing-coverts, and in having the outer vanes of the two outer tail-feathers pure white; the bill also appears shorter and thicker.

Yours truly,

Tsumeb,
S.W. African Protectorate.
3 January, 1917.

C. J. FINCH-DAVIES, Lieut.,
1st S.A.M.R.

The Steamer-Duck.

SIR,—May I be allowed to write a few lines in 'The Ibis' in reply to Mr. Phillips's letter about the Steamer-Duck published in the January number and in which my name is mentioned? It seems evident that Mr. Phillips's collector, Mr. Brooks, has only seen *one* species of Steamer-Duck and that *Tachyeres patachonicus*.

Mr. Phillips has therefore experience of *one* species only, and accordingly it may perhaps be doubted if he can reasonably talk with authority about *two*! Mr. Phillips's collector has only been to the Falkland Islands, which are a stronghold of *Tachyeres patachonicus*. This is confirmed by everything he says about the subject. South America, however, is a big place, and it is unsafe to ignore the fact that there are other places than the Falklands where other species of Steamer-Ducks may occur. I refer to my papers in 'The Ibis' for July 1916 on the subject and wish to confirm every word I have written there.

That Mr. Brooks has not seen *T. patachonicus* fly and could not make them fly although he has seen "thousands," notwithstanding that those birds were, judging from his description, really *T. patachonicus*, only tends to prove that

Mr. Brooks had either exceptionally bad luck or was not able to identify those birds when seen on the wing.

I repeat that I have seen several pairs of *T. patachonicus* fly high overhead from the inland lakes of Tierra del Fuego to the sea and *vice versa*, and the birds after alighting on the water have come up close to me.

Mr. Phillips doubts the possibility of these birds being able to fly to inland Chilian lakes as has been recorded elsewhere. I can assure him that their flight is quite strong enough to make such a thing possible, although on a visit to one of those lakes (Lake Todos los Santos) I did not myself see any.

Many species of waterfowl are sluggish in rising from the water if forced to do so, but this does not prove their inability to fly. In Chilian mountain streams on the Argentine side of the Andes I could never persuade *Merganetta armata* to rise from the water, but I have seen them fly at some height of their own free will.

T. cinereus as seen by me in Smith Channel and northwards along the south coast of Chiloe goes mostly in pairs, both sexes being grey and the bills of both sexes being yellow. The living bird which I brought home was an adult female, and after its death this was verified at the Leyden Museum by competent persons. It is no use Mr. Phillips saying that such a bird does not exist because he has not seen one.

Tachyeres cinereus has quite a different look, and as soon as I entered Smith Channel and saw pairs swimming, they struck me as being quite distinct from the birds I had seen in Tierra del Fuego, both in appearance and in their way of moving.

I will here give an extract of a letter which was written to me on this subject by an Englishman, Mr. Stewart Shipton, of Concepcion, prov. Tucuman, who resides in the Argentine Republic, and whose collector had recently returned from a trip to the southern parts of South America. He writes, quoting his collector Mr. John Morgensen, a Dane:—" *Tachyeres patachonicus* stands out first, chiefly on account of its ability to fly; but it is also distinguished from *T. cinereus* at a distance because it is smaller and the

bill of the female is dark and by its having a better developed tail. *T. patachonicus* is more sociable, six or seven being seen often together.

“*T. cinereus* lives in pairs, stays in the same place all the year round, and perches on the same rocks. It is of a pale grey, a little darker on the body than on the head and neck. The extremities of the barbules are of lead colour. *T. patachonicus* is of a darker colour; the edges of their feathers are brown on top. *T. patachonicus* has the habit of pretending inability to fly while bringing up their young.”

My opinion is that the origin of the doubt about the validity of the two species lies in the fact that most people have only seen one species, and that *T. patachonicus*, which is generally found in the more frequented parts of the Magellanic lands and to this species accordingly nearly all the skins in the European museums belong.

Tachyeres cinereus frequents the more secluded spots, which is only what one would expect, as the result of the birds inability to fly. In olden days, when the Straits of Magellan were not so much frequented as they are now, *T. cinereus* was probably a common bird there, so that the stories of the old seafarers rightly referred to that species. People, however, who travel there in these times find *T. patachonicus*, which has a general resemblance to it (but is quite different in reality), taking its place, and so the confusion arises. Besides, no one seems to have noticed—or, at least, to have published—the fact that the *female* of *T. patachonicus* has a dark bill and brown head.

Yours truly,

F. E. BLAAUW.

Gooilust,
12 March, 1917.

Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists'
Union.

The Annual General Meeting of the B. O. U. for 1917 was held on March 14 at the Offices of the Zoological Society of London, Mr. W. L. Sclater, in the absence of the President, being in the Chair. There were thirty Members present.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting and of the Special General Meeting held on April 12, 1916, were read and confirmed.

The Secretary read the following report of the Committee for the past year :—

“The Committee have very much pleasure in being able to report that during 1915–16 they have reduced the deficit from £268 1s. 6d. on January 1, 1916, to £40 on January 1, 1917. The accounts for the past year, which have been audited and passed by Mr. H. Munt, show a very satisfactory result. The total receipts in 1916 have been £941 17s. 1d. as compared with £768 15s. 7d. in the previous year, whilst the total payments have been £938 9s. 4d. (of which £208 1s. 6d. were payments for liabilities incurred in 1915) as against £766 18s. 2d. in 1915. The large increase in the receipts is due first to the increase in the rate of subscription, and secondly to sales of *The Ibis* Supplement, General Index, and a large number of back volumes of ‘*The Ibis*.’ The balance carried forward to 1917 was £3 7s. 9d., leaving a balance due to Messrs. Taylor & Francis on one account of £40.

“The cost of ‘*The Ibis*’ has been reduced from £505 2s. 6d. in 1915 to £465 1s. 11d. in the year under report. The present volume, which is the fifty-eighth and the fourth of the Tenth Series, contains 685 pages, and is illustrated with 5 coloured and 15 black plates and 12 text-figures. It has probably been reduced in cost to the minimum possible, and certainly far below the minimum desirable. The extra publications brought out by the Union are, however, now all paid for, and it will not be necessary in future to stint ‘*The Ibis*’ either in matter or plates.

“The sale of the General Index for the years 1895–1912 has been better than we anticipated, 145 copies having been sold. We have received since the 1st of January the sum of £50 from the Dutch New Guinea Expedition Committee.

“With regret the Committee report the deaths of the following Members since the last Annual General Meeting:—
R. J. Balston, Commander the Hon. R. O. B. Bridgeman,

Lt.-Col. E. A. Butler, J. C. Crowley, Guy L'Estrange Ewen, Lt.-Col. H. H. Harington, J. A. Harvie-Brown, Lt.-Col. Boyd Horsbrugh, Lord Lucas, T. H. Nelson, Major F. W. Proctor, The Rev. Canon S. G. Scott, Captain F. C. Selous.

"The following gentlemen have resigned :—Dr. F. D. Drewitt, G. F. Buxton, The Hon. and Rev. Canon Dutton, M. D. Macnaghten.

"The name of H. M. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria has been removed from the list of Ordinary Members of the Union.

"The membership of the Union, and comparison with the previous five years, is as follows :—

	1917.	1916.	1915.	1914.	1913.	1912.
Ordinary Members ...	416	420	441	433	425	420
Extraordinary ,, ...	1	1	1	1	2	3
Honorary ,, ...	9	9	9	7	8	9
Hon. Lady ,, ...	9	8	6	6	6	6
Colonial ,, ...	10	10	10	9	9	9
Foreign ,, ...	19	19	20	19	20	20

"There are 16 candidates for Ordinary Membership, 1 for Honorary Membership, and 2 for Foreign Membership."

The Statement of Accounts for the year 1916, previously circulated to Members, was submitted and approved.

Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker was re-elected Honorary Secretary and Treasurer for the ensuing year, and Mr. H. E. Howard was elected a Member of the Committee in the place of Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, who retired by rotation.

Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo and Mr. Hugh Whistler were appointed Scrutineers to superintend the Ballot.

The following sixteen gentlemen were elected Ordinary Members of the Union :—J. W. Bertram-Jones, Josias Cunningham, Benjamin G. Lampard-Vachell, J. M. D. Mackenzie, Herbert T. Malcomson, Capt. Edward H. Mann, M.C., R.H.A., A. C. Nicholl, Gregory T. Poliakov, Colonel Rullion H. Rattray, William Raw, R.N.V.R., Capt. John Sherard Reeve, Sydney Maddock Robinson, Capt. Wm. Shipton, M.B., B.C., R.A.M.C., Capt. Hugh Frederic Stoneham, Godfrey Webster, and Charles E. M. Woodford.

Frank Michler Chapman, a Foreign Member of the Union, was elected an Honorary Member.

Dr. Eduard Daniel van Oort, an Ordinary Member of the Union, was elected a Foreign Member.

Prof. Dr. Louis Brasil was also elected a Foreign Member.

A revised copy of the Rules of the Union with various additions and amendments, which had been drafted by the Committee, was then submitted and discussed.

A proposal to admit proxies in voting for the election of Members, was rejected on the motion of Mr. G. H. Lings, seconded by Mr. R. W. Chase; but Mr. Elwes gave notice that he would like this decision to be reconsidered at the next Annual Meeting.

An amendment to allow Members, removed from the Union under Rule 7, to make an appeal to the whole body of Members at a Meeting specially convened for that purpose, was rejected on the proposal of Mr. G. B. Hony, seconded by Mr. P. A. Buxton.

A resolution proposed by Colonel H. W. Feilden and seconded by Mr. A. Trevor-Battye, that the office of Vice-President of the Union be created, was not carried.

Other amendments, chiefly verbal and explanatory, having been passed, it was resolved on the motion of Mr. R. W. Chase that the Rules as amended should be printed and circulated.

The following resolution was proposed by the Committee:—

That the Sub-Committee who edited the new edition of the B. O. U. List of British Birds be reappointed, with power to add to their number, to make the necessary additions and corrections that from time to time may be necessary to the list and to publish them in 'The Ibis.'

This was carried unanimously.

Captain H. S. Gladstone proposed and Mr. Ezra seconded a vote of thanks to the Auditor, Mr. H. Munt. This was duly carried.

Mr. E. Bidwell proposed and the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain seconded a vote of thanks to the Zoological Society for the

use of their offices and rooms during the past year. This was carried unanimously.

Mr. Elwes moved that a vote of thanks be accorded to the Chairman. This was seconded by Mr. Meade-Waldo and carried.

The Selous Memorial.

At the January Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club a proposal was brought forward by Mr. H. J. Elwes that the Club and the Union should take steps to show their appreciation of the late Capt. F. C. Selous's work and character by establishing some sort of permanent memorial to him, and he further suggested that it appeared to him that the most suitable form which the memorial should take would be a mural tablet of some kind to be placed in the Central Hall of the Natural History Museum, or alternatively or in addition the institution of a Selous Medal to be awarded from time to time to such persons as had distinguished themselves as field-ornithologists. It was subsequently resolved that Mr. Elwes and Mr. Stuart Baker should be appointed to arrange the matter and to discuss it with representatives of such other scientific societies as were interested in the career of Capt. Selous.

A strong Committee has now been formed containing representatives of such bodies as the Royal Geographical, the Zoological, and other Societies, as well as Mr. Elwes and Mr. Stuart Baker who have been asked to act as Chairman and Secretary respectively of the Executive Committee.

We understand that the Committee have already approved of the suggestion of the erection of a mural tablet in the Museum and that arrangements are being made to collect subscriptions to carry this into effect.

It is further proposed that the matter of the Selous Medal shall be left to be dealt with by the Committee of the B. O. U., and a definite decision on the matter will shortly be taken and reported on in the next number of 'The Ibis.'